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MISCELLANY.

THE CONGRESS OF THE LEARNED SOCIETIES AT PARIS.

On Friday, May 21, the *Congrès des Sociétés Savantes* was opened by the Admiral Julien de la Graviere, and on the following Monday, M. Siméon Luce, of the Institute of France, opened the Annual Congress of the Society of Social Economy. The Congress of the Learned Societies of France is assembled annually under the patronage of the Minister of Public Instruction. It furnishes an occasion once a year for the *savantes* of the "province," as they are called by the Parisians, to unite at Paris, exchange news and ideas, communicate the researches and investigations of the year, and come into contact with the highest authorities in the different branches of science—who are, as a matter of course, to be found at Paris.

After the first general session, the congress divided itself into five sections:—history and philology; archeology; economic and social sciences; historical and descriptive geography; and science. The mornings were devoted to special communications and the afternoons to discussions of questions previously determined in the program of the congress. The economic section was ably presided over by M. Levasseur. The nine questions that afforded subjects for discussions and papers, were as follows:—

1. The position occupied and the nature of the functions fulfilled by the *procureurs* of the king under the *ancien régime* and in the different regions of France—their relations with the local authorities.

2. The attributes of the *procureurs-syndics** and other officials of the same category under the Constitution of 1791.

3. Local statistical researches on accidents, sickness and deaths in the different callings and professions.

4. Paternal authority over the person and property of legitimate or illegitimate children.

5. The French and foreign institutions that facilitate arbitration and conciliation between employer and employee.

6. The limits of State intervention in questions of public hygiene.

7. The execution of the sentence of "hard labor."

8. Real estate credit in France and the reform of the mortgage system.

9. The position of professional or technical schools in primary compulsory education. Should the workshop be placed in the school or the school in the workshop? International comparisons.

The most important discussions of the congress were on the topics 5, 6 and 8. On number 5 two interesting papers were read, one by M. Gibon in which he set forth the favorable working of arbitration committees composed of employers and workmen, the other by M. Bellom of the Society of Comparative Legislation of Paris in which he gave a *résumé* of the results observed in different foreign countries, especially in Germany. The eighth question was ably treated by M. Saint-Genis, who developed both the legal and economic aspects of the subject.

Several papers on special topics were read. M. Babeau read the results of an interesting research on "The Efforts Made by the Government to Combat High Prices in 1724," and M. Dumas, a paper on "The Commerce in Grain in Touraine at the End of the Eighteenth Century." M. Dumas maintained that Louis XV. was innocent of any desire to speculate in grain at the moment when his subjects were at the verge of starvation,

* Under the *ancien régime*, "*procureurs-syndics*" were the chief authorities in the municipal government.

and that, though the province was blameworthy for the measures taken to avert a famine that seemed inevitable, its intentions were honorable and were meant for the good of the people.

Dr. Laurent gave his personal experience as a medical inspector of one of the school districts of Paris, showing the depressing effects on the intellect and morals of children addicted to the use of tobacco, that he had observed during a portion of their primary school career. M. Lequien read a paper on "The Results Obtained in the Struggle against the Use of Tobacco;" M. Massilon-Rouvet one on "Economic Building from a Technical Point of View;" and M. Cacherix one on "The Life-Saving Service in France and in Foreign Countries with Special Reference to its Position in the Cities." Other papers had been announced but the authors were not present. They will be published in the report.

One cannot fail to see that the choice of subjects was hardly judicious. The discussions were very often directed to subjects whose economic interest was obscure.

CONGRESS OF THE SOCIETY OF SOCIAL ECONOMY.

At the opening session of this society on Monday evening, May 25, the President, M. Simeon Luce, of the Institute of France, famous for his historical researches into French social conditions during the Middle Ages, read a paper on "Frederic Le Play, la vieille France, l'Ecole des Chartes et la Société d'Economie Sociale." It was an eulogy of the founder of the Society and a tribute to the France of the Middle Ages. The real work of the Congress began on Tuesday morning. A paper of M. Princeteau read by M. Gaston David on "The Strikes of the Glassblowers in the Region of Bordelais," made clear the pernicious influence of the Federation of Labor of Paris, which had sent to these unfortunate laborers the order to leave their work. The efforts towards arbitration made by M. Princeteau had failed of the desired effect and the unhappy strike continued to the detriment of the employer and employee. M. H. C. de Wiart of Brussels in a paper, "Alcoholism in Belgium," argued that

the thirteen liters of alcohol consumed on the average by each Belgian annually, while the Frenchman on the average consumes not more than four, represent an expenditure of from 20 to 25 per cent. of the Belgian's wages in alcoholic drinks. M. Wiart showed the extreme difficulty of effecting any reform through legislation, because Belgium with its system of limited suffrage (a state of affairs which has been changed by recent laws) did not have more than one hundred and thirty thousand electors of which forty thousand were saloon keepers or distillers. The general session on Tuesday evening was presided over by M. Mercier, Prime Minister of the Province of Quebec.

Among the papers read at this and subsequent sessions were the following:

By M. Cheysson on "Internationalism in Social Questions," in which he traced the progress made in the different branches of modern industry, the birth and development of international socialism and the questions examined and the results obtained by the Berlin Conference of Labor.

By M. Etcheverry, Deputy of the Basses Pyrénées, on "Agricultural Credit before the Houses of Parliament." After passing in review the different bills now before the Chamber of Deputies, he arrived at the following conclusions, which were unanimously echoed by the Congress as to the principles if not the applications: (1) The organization of agricultural credit should be left to private initiative. "I have not to discuss the dangers of State intervention," said the author, "they are too well known to you all." This attitude was characteristic of the Congress. (2) Reform of customs and habits is more essential than any laws that might be enacted. (3) The basis of any system should be,—personal credit founded upon local solidarity and responsibility.

By M. Louis Guibert on "The Communities of the Linconsin during the XIII, and XIV, Centuries."

By M. Albert Babeau on "An Agricultural and Industrial Colony in Provence at the Close of the Last Century," which was another tribute to the memory of the "*ancien régime*."

By M. Eugene Rostand, president of the savings banks of the Department of the "*Bouches-du-Rhône*," on "Savings Banks Considered as Centres of Social Action." M. Rostand protested against the present plan of depositing the funds of the savings banks in the State Treasury. After describing the savings banks of the different countries of Europe and showing that their funds are used in part, to encourage social and philanthropic work such as construction of workmen's habitations, asylums, schools and libraries and to fructify, by loans, local industry and agriculture, M. Rostand demanded the same system for the French savings banks.

By M. G. Blondel on "The Condition of the Rural Classes in Germany at the Close of the Middle ages."

By M. De Laynes, Professor in the Law School of Bordeaux, on "The Family Property, its Preservation and its Hereditary Transmission." To many minds this subject is intimately connected with the stagnation of the French population and it is exciting the keenest interest throughout the country. M. Laynes explains how the Civil Code with its provisions for a distribution of property "in kind" among the children, causes the family estate soon to pass into the hands of strangers. He then reviewed the different foreign systems, paying special attention to the American "homestead."

Theoretical questions of political economy were almost wholly banished from the program as one would expect them to be in view of the principles of Le Play and his school.

LEO H. ROWE.

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